A SERMON

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MATTH. XXV. 46.

And these shall go away into everlasting punishment, but the Righteous into life eternal.

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And these shall go away into everlasting punishment, but the Righteous into life eternal.

AMong all the Arguments to Repentance and a good Life, those have the greatest force and power upon the minds of Men, which are fetch'd from another World, and from the final state of good and bad Men after this Life. And this our *Saviour* represents to us in a most lively manner, in that prospect which, in the latter part of this *Chapter*, he gives us of the *Judgment* of the *great Day*, namely, that at the end of the World the *Son of Man shall come in his glory, with his Holy Angels, and shall sit upon the Throne of his Glory; and all Nations shall be gathered before him*, and shall be separated into two great Companies, the *Righteous* and the *Wicked*; who shall stand the one on the Right hand, and the other on the Left of this great Judge; who shall pronounce Sentence severally upon them according to the actions which they have done in this Life: The Righteous shall be rewarded with eternal happiness, and the Wicked shall be sentenc'd to everlasting punishment. *And these*, that is, *the wicked shall go away into everlasting punishment, but the Righteous into Life eternal.*

The *Words* are plain, and need no explication. For I take it for granted, that every one, at first hearing of them, does clearly apprehend the difference between the *Righteous* and the *Wicked*, and between endless Happiness and Misery: But altho' these *Words* be so very easy to be understood, they can never be too much consider'd by us. The scope and design of them is, to represent to us the different Fates of good and bad Men in another World, and that their Ends *there*, will be as different, as their Ways and Doings have been *here* in this World: The consideration whereof is the greatest discouragement to Sin, and the most powerful argument in the World to a holy and virtuous Life: Because it is an argument taken from our greatest and most lasting interest, our happi-

happineſs or our miſery to all Eternity: A concernment of that vaſt conſequence, that it muſt be the greateſt ſtupidity and folly in the World for any Man to neglect it.

This eternal ſtate of Rewards and Puniſhments in another World, our *Bleſſed Saviour* hath clearly reveal'd to us. And as to one part of it, *viz.* That good Men ſhall be eternally happy in another World, every one gladly admits it: But many are loth that the other part ſhould be true concerning the eternal puniſhment of wicked Men. And therefore they pretend that it is contrary to the Juſtice of God to puniſh tempory Crimes with eternal Torments: Becauſe Juſtice always obſerves a proportion between Offences and Puniſhments: but between temporary Sins and eternal Puniſhments, there is no proportion. And as this ſeems hard to be reconcil'd with Juſtice, ſo much more with that exceſs of Goodneſs which we ſuppoſe to be in God.

And therefore they ſay, that tho' God ſeems to have declar'd that impenitent Sinners ſhall be everlaſtingly puniſh'd, yet theſe declarations of Scripture are ſo to be mollified and underſtood, as that we may be able to reconcile them with the eſſential perfections of the Divine Nature.

This is the full force and ſtrength of the Objection. And my work at this time ſhall be to clear, if I can, this difficult point. And that for theſe two Reaſons. *Firſt*, For the vindication of the Divine Juſtice and Goodneſs: *That God may be juſtified in his ſayings, and* appear *Righteous when he judgeth.* And *Secondly*, Becauſe the belief of the threatnings of God in their utmoſt extent is of ſo great a moment to good Life, and ſo great a diſcouragement to Sin: For the ſting of Sin is the terror of eternal puniſhment; and if Men were once ſet free from the fear and belief of this, the moſt powerful reſtraint from Sin would be taken away.

So that in Anſwer to this Objection, I ſhall endeavour to prove theſe two things.

Firſt, That the eternal puniſhment of wicked Men in another World is plainly threatned in Scripture.

Secondly, That this is not inconſiſtent either with the Juſtice or the Goodneſs of God.

First, That the eternal punishment of wicked Men in another World is plainly threatned in Scripture, namely, in these following *Texts*, Matth. 18. 8. *It is better for thee to enter into Life halt and maim'd, than having two hands or two feet to be cast into everlasting fire.* And *Matth.* 25. 41. *Depart ye cursed into everlasting fire, prepared for the Devil and his Angels.* And here in the *Text*, *these*, that is, *the wicked shall go away into everlasting punishment.* And *Mark* 9. it is there three several times with great vehemency repeated by our *Saviour*, *where their worm dyeth not, and the fire is not quenched.* And 2 *Thess.* 1. 9. speaking of *them that know not God, and obey not the Gospel of his Son*, it is said of them, *who shall be punished with everlasting destruction.*

I know very well that great Endeavours hath been us'd to avoid the force of these *Texts*, by shewing that the words, *for ever* and *everlasting*, are frequently us'd in Scripture in a more limited sense, only for a long duration and continuance. Thus *for ever*, doth very often in the *Old Testament* only signify for a long time, and till the end of the *Jewish* Dispensation. And in the *Epistle* of St. *Jude*, *verse* 7th. the Cities of *Sodom* and *Gomorrah* are said to be *set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire*, that is, of a fire that was not extinguish'd till those Cities were utterly consum'd.

And therefore to clear the meaning of the forementioned *Texts*. *First*, I shall readily grant, that the words, *for ever* and *everlasting*, do not always in Scripture signify an endless duration; and that this is sufficiently prov'd by the instances alledg'd to this purpose. But then *Secondly*, It cannot be denied on the other hand, that these words are often in Scripture used in a larger sense, and so as necessarily to signify an interminable and endless duration. As where Eternity is attributed to God, and he is said to *live for ever and ever*: And where eternal happiness in another World is promised to good Men, and that *they shall be for ever with the Lord.* Now the very same words and expressions are used concerning the punishment of wicked Men in another life, and there is great reason why we should understand them in the same extent: Both, because if God had intended to have told us that the punishment of

wicked

wicked Men ſhall have no end, the Languages wherein the Scriptures are written do hardly afford fuller and more certain words, than thoſe that are uſed in this caſe, whereby to expreſs to us a duration without end. And likewiſe, which is almoſt a peremptory deciſion of the thing, becauſe the duration of the puniſhment of wicked Men is in the very ſame Sentence expreſs'd by the very ſame word which is uſed for the duration of the happineſs of the righteous: As is evident from the *Text*, *Theſe*, ſpeaking of the wicked, *ſhall go away*, εἰς κόλασιν αἰώνιον *into eternal puniſhment*, *but the righteous*, εἰς ζωὴν αἰώνιον *into eternal life*. I proceed to the

Second Thing I propos'd; namely, to ſhew that this is not inconſiſtent either with the Juſtice or the Goodneſs of God. For in this the force of the Objection lies. And it hath been attempted to be anſwered ſeveral ways, none of which ſeems to me to give clear and full ſatisfaction to it.

Firſt, It is ſaid by ſome, that becauſe Sin is infinite in reſpect of the Object againſt whom it is committed, which is God, therefore it deſerves an infinite puniſhment.

But this I doubt will upon examination be found to have more of ſubtlety than of ſolidity in it. 'Tis true indeed, that the dignity of the Perſon againſt whom any offence is committed, is a great aggravation of the fault. For which reaſon all offences againſt God are certainly the greateſt of all other. But that Crimes ſhould hereby be heighten'd to an infinite degree, can by no means be admitted; and that for this plain reaſon; becauſe then the evil and demerit of all Sins muſt neceſſarily be equal; for the demerit of no Sin can be more than infinite: And if the demerit of all Sins be equal, there can then be no reaſon for the degrees of puniſhment in another World. But to deny that there are degrees of puniſhment there, is not only contrary to reaſon, but to our *Saviour*'s expreſs aſſertion, that ſome ſhall be *beaten with many ſtripes* and ſome with *fewer*, and that it ſhall *be more tolerable for ſome in the day of judgment* than for others. Beſides, that by the ſame reaſon that the leaſt Sin that is committed againſt God may be ſaid to be infinite becauſe of its object, the leaſt puniſhment that is inflicted by God may be ſaid to be infinite becauſe of its Author; and then all puniſhment from God as well as all Sins againſt him would be equal; which is palpably abſurd. So that this anſwer is by no means ſufficient to break the force of this Objection.

Secondly, It is ſaid by others, that if wicked Men lived for ever in this World they would ſin for ever, and therefore they deſerve to be puniſh'd for ever. But this hath neither Truth nor Reaſon enough in it to give ſatisfaction. For who can certainly tell that if a Man lived never ſo long he would never repent and grow better?

Beſides, that the Juſtice of God doth only puniſh the Sins which Men have committed in this life, and not thoſe which they might poſſibly have committed if they had lived longer.

Thirdly, It is ſaid in the laſt place, that God hath ſet before Men everlaſting Happineſs and Miſery, and the Sinner hath his choice. Here are two things ſaid which ſeem to bid fairly towards an anſwer.

Firſt, That the reward which God promiſeth to our obedience is equal to the puniſhment which he threatens to our diſobedience. But yet this I doubt will not reach the buſineſs: Becauſe tho' it be not contrary to Juſtice to exceed in Rewards, that being matter of meer favour; yet it may be ſo to exceed in Puniſhments.

Secondly, It is further ſaid, that the Sinner in this caſe hath nothing to complain of, ſince he hath his own choice. This I confeſs is enough to ſilence the Sinner, and to make him to acknowledge that his deſtruction is of himſelf; but yet for all that, it does not ſeem ſo clearly to ſatisfy the objection from the diſproportion between the fault and the puniſhment.

And therefore I ſhall endeavour to clear, if it may be, this matter yet a little further by theſe following Conſiderations.

Firſt, Let it be conſider'd, that the meaſure of Penalties with reſpect to Crimes is not only nor always, to be taken from the quality and degree of the offence, much leſs from the duration and continuance of it, but from the ends and reaſons of Government; which require ſuch penalties as may, if it be poſſible, ſecure the obſervation of the Law, and deterr Men from the breach of it. And the reaſon of this is evident, becauſe if it were once declar'd that no Man ſhou'd ſuffer longer for any Crime than according to the proportion of the time in which it was committed, the conſequence of this would be that Sinners would be better husbands of their time and ſin ſo much the faſter, that they might have the greater bargain of it, and might ſatisfy for their Sins by a ſhorter puniſhment.

And it would be unreaſonable likewiſe upon another account; becauſe ſome of the greateſt Sins may perhaps be committed-

mitted in the shortest time; for instance, *Murther*; the act whereof may be over in a moment, but the effects of it are perpetual. For he that kills a Man once kills him for ever. The act of Murther may be committed in a trice, but the injury is endless and irreparable. So that this objection of temporary Crimes being punished with so much longer sufferings is plainly of no force.

Besides, that whoever considers how ineffectual the threatning even of eternal torments is to the greatest part of Sinners, will soon be satisfy'd that a less penalty than that of eternal sufferings would to the far greatest part of Mankind have been in all probability of little or no force. And therefore if any thing more terrible than eternal vengeance could have been threatned to the workers of iniquity, it had not been unreasonable, because it would all have been little enough to deter Men effectually from Sin.

So that what proportion Crimes and Penalties ought to bear to each other, is not so properly a consideration of Justice, as of Wisdom and Prudence in the Law-giver.

And the reason of this seems very plain, because the measure of Penalties is not taken from any strict proportion betwixt Crimes and Punishments; but from one great end and design of Government; which is to secure the observation of wholesome and necessary Laws; and consequently whatever Penalties are proper and necessary to this end are not unjust.

And this Consideration I desire may be more especially observed, because it strikes at the very foundation of the objection. For if the appointing and apportioning of Penalties to Crimes be not so properly a consideration of Justice, but rather of Prudence in the Law-giver: then whatever the disproportion may be between temporary Sins and eternal sufferings, Justice cannot be said to be concern'd in it.

Justice indeed is concern'd, that the Righteous and the Wicked should not be treated alike; and farther yet, that greater Sins should have a heavier punishment, and that *mighty sinners should be mightily tormented*; but all this may be consider'd and adjusted in the degree and the intenseness of the suffering without making any difference in the duration of it.

The case then in short stands thus. Whenever we break the Laws of God we fall into his hands and lie at his mercy, and he may without injustice inflict what punishment upon us he pleaseth: And consequently to secure his Law from violation,

he may before-hand threaten what penalties he thinks fit and necessary to deter Men from the Transgression of it. And this is not esteem'd unjust among Men, to punish Crimes that are committed in an instant with the perpetual loss of Estate, or Liberty, or Life.

Secondly, This will yet appear more reasonable when we consider, that after all, he that threatens hath still the power of execution in his own hands. For there is this remarkable difference between Promises and Threatnings, that he who promiseth passeth over a right to another, and thereby stands oblig'd to him in Justice and Faithfulness to make good his promise; and if he do not, the party to whom the promise is made is not only disappointed but injuriously dealt withal: But in threatnings it is quite otherwise. He that threatens keeps the right of punishing in his own hand, and is not oblig'd to execute what he hath threatned any further than the reasons and ends of Government do require: And he may without any injury to the party threatned, remit and abate as much as he pleaseth of the punishment that he hath threatned: And because in so doing he is not worse but better than his word, no body can find fault or complain of any wrong or injustice thereby done to him.

Nor is this any impeachment of God's Truth and Faithfulness, any more than it is esteem'd among Men a piece of falshood not to do what they have threatned. God did absolutely threaten the destruction of the City of *Nineveh*, and his peevish *Prophet* did understand the threatning to be absolute, and was very angry with God for employing him in a Message that was not made good. But God understood his own right, and did what he pleas'd notwithstanding the threatning he had denounc'd, and for all *Jonah* was so touch'd in honour, that he had rather have dy'd himself than that *Nineveh* should not have been destroy'd, only to have verify'd his message.

I know it is said in this case, that God hath confirm'd these threatnings by an Oath, which is a certain sign of the immutability of his counsel; and therefore his Truth is concern'd in the strict and rigorous execution of them. The Land of *Canaan* was a Type of Heaven, and the *Israelites* who rebell'd in the Wilderness were also a Type of impenitent Sinners under the Gospel; and consequently the Oath of God concerning the rebellious *Israelites*, when he *sware in his wrath that they should not enter into his rest*, that is, into the Land of *Canaan*, doth equally

qually oblige him to execute his threatning upon all impenitent Sinners under the Goſpel, that *they ſhall never enter into the Kingdom of God*. And this is very truly reaſon'd ſo far as the threatning extends; which if we attend to the plain words of it, beyond which threatnings are never to be ſtretch'd, doth not ſeem to reach any further than to the excluſion of impenitent Sinners out of Heaven, and their falling finally ſhort of the Reſt and Happineſs of the Righteous: Which however, directly overthrows the Opinion aſcrib'd to *Origen*, that the Devils and wicked Men ſhall all be ſaved at laſt; God having *ſworn in his wrath that they ſhall never enter into his reſt*.

But then, as to the eternal Miſery and Puniſhment threatned to wicked Men in the other World, tho' it be not neceſſarily comprehended in this Oath that they *ſhall not enter into his reſt*: yet we are to conſider, that both the tenour of the *Sentence* which our bleſſed *Saviour* hath aſſur'd us will be paſs'd upon them at the Judgment of the Great Day, *Depart ye curſed into everlaſting fire*; and likewiſe this Declaration in the Text, that *the wicked ſhall go away into everlaſting puniſhment*, tho' they do not reſtrain God from doing what he pleaſes, yet they cut off from the Sinner all reaſonable hopes of the relaxation or mitigation of them. For ſince the great Judge of the World hath made ſo plain and expreſs Declaration, and will certainly paſs ſuch a Sentence, it would be the greateſt folly and madneſs in the World for the Sinner to entertain any hope of eſcaping it, and to venture his Soul upon that hope.

I know but one thing more, commonly ſaid upon this Argument, that ſeems material. And that is this, That the words *death* and *deſtruction* and *periſhing*, whereby the puniſhment of wicked Men in the other world is moſt frequently expreſs'd in *Scripture*, do moſt properly import *annihilation* and an utter end of Being; and therefore may reaſonably be ſo underſtood in the matter of which we are now ſpeaking.

To this I anſwer, that theſe Words, and thoſe which anſwer them in other Languages, are often, both in *Scripture* and other *Authors*, uſed to ſignify a ſtate of great miſery and ſuffering, without the utter extinction of the miſerable. Thus God is often in *Scripture* ſaid to bring *deſtruction* upon a Nation when he ſends great Judgments upon them, tho' they do not exterminate and make an utter end of them.

And nothing is more common in moſt Languages, than by *periſhing* to expreſs a Perſon's being undone and made very

miſerable. As in that known paſſage in *Tiberius* his Letter to the *Roman* Senate, * *Let all the Gods and Goddeſſes*, ſaith he, *deſtroy me worſe than at this very time I feel my ſelf to* periſh, &c. in which ſaying, the words, *deſtroy* and *periſh*, are both of them us'd to expreſs the miſerable anguiſh and torment which at that time he felt in his mind, as *Tacitus* tells us at large.

And as for the word *Death*; a ſtate of miſery which is as bad or worſe than death may properly enough be call'd by that name: and for this reaſon the puniſhment of wicked Men after the Day of Judgment, is in the Book of the *Revelation* ſo frequently and fitly call'd *the ſecond death*. And *the lake of fire*, into which the wicked *ſhall be caſt* to be tormented in it, is expreſly call'd *the ſecond death*, Rev. 20. 14.

But beſides this, they that argue from the force of theſe words, that the puniſhment of wicked Men in the other World ſhall be nothing elſe but an utter end of their Being, do neceſſarily fall into two great inconveniencies.

Firſt, That hereby they exclude all poſitive puniſhment and torment of Sinners. For if *the ſecond death*, and to be *deſtroy'd*, and to *periſh* ſignify nothing elſe but the *Annihilation* of Sinners and an utter extinction of their Being; and if this be all the effect of that dreadful *Sentence* which ſhall be paſs'd upon them at the *Day of Judgment*, then the *Fire of Hell* is quench'd all at once, and is only a frightful *Metaphor* without any meaning. But this is directly contrary to the tenour of *Scripture*, which doth ſo often deſcribe the puniſhment of wicked Men in Hell by poſitive torments: and particularly our Bleſſed *Saviour*, deſcribing the lamentable ſtate of the damn'd in Hell, expreſly ſays that *there ſhall be weeping and wailing and gnaſhing of teeth*; which cannot be, if Annihilation be all the meaning and effect of the Sentence of the Great Day.

Secondly, Another inconvenience of this Opinion is, that if *Annihilation* be all the puniſhment of Sinners in another World, then the puniſhment of all Sinners muſt of neceſſity be equal, becauſe there is no degrees of *Annihilation* or *not-being*. But this alſo is moſt directly contrary to *Scripture*, as I have already ſhewn.

I know very well that ſome who are of this Opinion do allow a very long and tedious time of the moſt terrible and in-

* *Ita me Dii Deaque omnes pejus perdant quam hodie perire me ſenti-*

tolerable

tolerable torment of Sinners, and after that they believe that there ſhall be an utter end of their Being.

But then they muſt not argue this from the force of the Words before mention'd, becauſe the plain inference from thence is, that Anninilation is all the puniſhment that wicked Men ſhall undergo in the next life: And if that be not true, as I have plainly ſhewn that it is not, I do not ſee from what other words or expreſſions in *Scripture* they can find the leaſt ground for this Opinion, that the Torment of wicked Men ſhall at laſt end in their *Annihilation*. And yet admitting all this, for which I think there is no ground at all in *Scripture*, I cannot ſee what great comfort Sinners can take in the thought of a tedious time of terrible torment, ending at laſt in *Annihilation* and the utter extinction of their Beings.

Thirdly, We may conſider further, that the primary end of all Threatnings is not puniſhment, but the prevention of it. For God does not threaten that Men may ſin and be puniſh'd, but that they may not ſin, and ſo may eſcape the puniſhment threatn'd. And therefore the higher the threatning runs, ſo much the more mercy and goodneſs there is in it; becauſe it is ſo much the more likely to hinder Men from incurring the penalty that is threatned.

Fourthly, Let it be conſider'd likewiſe, that when it is ſo very plain that God hath threatned eternal miſery to impenitent Sinners, all the prudence in the World obliges Men to believe that he is in good earneſt, and will execute theſe threatnings upon them, if they will obſtinately ſtand it out with him, and will not be brought to Repentance. And therefore in all reaſon we ought ſo to demean our ſelves, and to perſwade others, as knowing the terror of the Lord, and that they who wilfully break his Laws are in danger of eternal Death. To which I will add in the

Fifth and laſt place, That if we ſuppoſe that God did intend that his threatnings ſhould have their effect to deter Men the breach of his Laws, it cannot be imagin'd that in the ſame Revelation which declares theſe threatnings, any intimation ſhould be given of the abatement or non-execution of them. For by this God would have weaken'd his own Laws, and have taken off the edge and terror of his threatnings: Becauſe a threatning hath quite loſt his force, if we once come to believe that it will not be executed: And conſequently it would be a very impious deſign to go about to teach or perſwade any thing

thing to the contrary, and a betraying Men into that misery which had it been truly believ'd might have been avoided.

We are all bound to preach, and you and I are all bound to believe the terrors of the Lord. Not so, as fawcily to determine and pronounce what God must do in this case; for after all, He may do what he will, as I have clearly shewn: But what is fit for us to do, and what we have reason to expect, if notwithstanding a plain and expres threatning of *the vengeance of eternal fire*, we still go on to *treasure up to our selves wrath against the day of wrath, and the Revelation of the righteous Judgement of God*; and will desperately put it to the hazard, whether, and how far God will execute his threatnings upon Sinners in another World.

And therefore there is no need why we should be very solicitously concern'd for the honour of God's Justice or Goodness in this matter. Let us but take care to believe and avoid the threatnings of God; and then, how terrible soever they are, no harm can come to us. And as for God, let us not doubt but that he will take care of his own honour; and that he, *who is holy in all his ways, and righteous in all his works*, will do nothing that is repugnant to his eternal Goodness and Righteousness; and that he will certainly so manage things at the Judgment of the Great Day, as *to be justified in his sayings, and to be righteous when we are judged*. For notwithstanding his threatnings, he hath reserved Power enough in his own hands to do right to all his Perfections: So that we may rest assur'd, that he will *judge the world in righteousness*; and if it be any wise inconsistent either with Righteousness or Goodness, which he knows much better than we do, to make Sinners miserable for ever, that he will not do it; nor is it credible, that he would threaten Sinners with a punishment which he could not justly execute upon them.

Therefore Sinners ought always to be afraid of it, and reckon upon it: And always to remember, that there is great Goodness and Mercy in the severity of God's threatnings; and that nothing will more justify the infliction of eternal Torments, than the foolish Presumption of Sinners in venturing upon them, notwithstanding such plain and terrible Threatnings.

This I am sure, is a good Argument to all of us, to *work out our Salvation with fear and trembling*; and with all possible care to endeavour the prevention of that misery which is so terribly

terribly severe, that at present we can hardly tell how to reconcile it with the Justice and Goodness of God.

This God heartily desires we would do; and hath solemnly sworn, that *he hath no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather that he should turn from his wickedness and live.* So that here is all imaginable care taken to prevent our miscarriage, and all the assurance that the God of Truth can give us of his unwillingness to bring this misery upon us. And both those, I am sure, are Arguments of great Goodness. For what can Goodness do more than to warn us of this misery, and earnestly to perswade us to prevent it; and to threaten us so very terribly, on purpose to deter us from so great a danger?

And if this will not prevail with us, but we still go on to *despise the riches of God's goodness, and long-suffering and forbearance*; what in reason remains for us, *but a fearful looking for of Judgment and fiery indignation to consume us?* And what almost can Justice or even Goodness it self do less, than to inflict that punishment upon us which with eyes open we would wilfully run upon; and which no warning, no perswasion, no importunity could prevail with us to avoid? And when, as the *Apostle* says, *knowing the Judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death*; yet for all that, we would venture to commit them.

And therefore whatever we suffer, we do but inherit our own choice, and have no reason to complain of God, who hath set before us life and death, eternal happiness and misery, and hath left us to be the Carvers of our own Fortune: And if, after all this, we will obstinately refuse this happiness, and wilfully run upon this misery, *Woe unto us! for we have rewarded evil to our selves.*

You see then, by all that hath been said upon this Argument, what we have all reason to expect, if we will still go on in our Sins, and will not be brought to Repentance. You have heard what a terrible punishment the just God hath threatned to the workers of iniquity: and that in as plain words as can be used to express any thing. *This*, that is, *the wicked shall go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into life eternal.*

Here are *Life* and *Death*, Happiness and Misery set before us. Not this frail and mortal Life, which is scarcely worth the having, were it not in order to a better and happier Life; nor a temporal Death, to get above the dread whereof should not me-

methinks be difficult to us, were it not for the bitter and terrible consequences of it: But an eternal Life, and an eternal Enjoyment of all things which can render Life pleasant and happy; and a perpetual death, which will for ever torment us, but never make an end of us.

These God propounds to our choice: And if the consideration of them will not prevail with us to leave our Sins and to reform our Lives, what will? Weightier Motives cannot be propos'd to the Understanding of Man, than *everlasting Punishment*, and *Life eternal*; than the greatest and most durable happiness, and the most intolerable and lasting misery that human Nature is capable of.

Now, considering in what Terms the Threatnings of the Gospel are express, we have all the reason in the World to believe that the Punishment of Sinners in another World will be everlasting. However, we cannot be certain of the contrary, time enough to prevent it; not till we come there, and find it by Experience how it is: and if it prove so, it will then be too late either to prevent that terrible Doom or to get it revers'd.

Some comfort themselves with the uncomfortable and uncertain Hope of being discharg'd out of Being, and reduc'd to their first Nothing; at least after the tedious and terrible suffering of the most grievous and exquisite Torments for innumerable Ages. And if this should happen to be true, good God! how feeble, how cold a comfort is this? Where is the Reason and Understanding of Men, to make this their last Refuge and Hope; and to lean upon it as a matter of mighty Consolation, that they shall be Miserable beyond all Imagination, and beyond all Patience, for God knows how many Ages? *Have all the workers of iniquity no knowledge?* No right sense and judgment of things? no Consideration and Care of themselves, no Concernment for their own lasting Interest and Happiness?

Origen, I know not for what good Reason, is said to have been of Opinion, That the Punishment of Devils and wicked Men, after the Day of Judgment, will continue but for a thousand Years; and that after *that* time, they shall all be finally saved. I can very hardly perswade my self, that so wise and learned a Man as *Origen* was, should be positive in an Opinion for which there can be no certain Ground in Reason, especially for the punctual and precise Term of a thousand Years; and for which there is no Ground at all, that I know of, from Divine Revelation. But

But upon the whole matter, however it be; be it for a thouſand Years, or be it for a longer and unknown Term, or be it for Ever, which is plainly threatned in the Goſpel: I ſay, however it be, this is certain, that it is infinitely wiſer to take care to avoid it, than to diſpute it, and to run the final hazard of it. Put it which way we will, eſpecially if we put it at the worſt, as in all Prudence we ought to do, it is by all poſſible means to be provided againſt: ſo terrible, ſo intolerable is the Thought, yea the very leaſt Suſpicion of being Miſerable for Ever.

And now give me leave to ask you, as St. *Paul* did King *Agrippa*, *Do you believe the Scriptures?* And I hope I may anſwer for you my ſelf, as he did for *Agrippa*, *I know you do believe them.* And in them theſe things are clearly revealed, and are part of that *Creed* of which we make a ſolemn Profeſſion every Day.

And yet when we conſider how moſt Men live, is it credible that they do firmly believe this plain Declaration of our *Saviour* and our *Judge*, That *the wicked ſhall go away into everlaſting Puniſhment, but the righteous into Life eternal?*

Or if they do in ſome ſort believe it, is it credible that they do at all conſider it ſeriouſly, and lay it to heart? So that if we have a mind to reconcile our Belief with our Actions, we muſt either alter our *Bible* and our *Creed*, or we muſt change our Lives.

Let us then *conſider, and ſhew our ſelves Men.* And if we do ſo, can any Man to pleaſe himſelf for a little while be contented to be puniſhed for ever: and for the Shadow of a ſhort and imperfect Happineſs in this Life, be willing to run the hazard of being really and eternally miſerable in the next world?

Surely this Conſideration alone, of the extreme and endleſs Miſery of impenitent Sinners in another World, if it were but well wrought into our Minds, would be ſufficient to kill all the Temptations of this World, and to lay them dead at our Feet; and to make us deaf to all the Enchantments of Sin and Vice: Becauſe they bid us ſo infinitely to our loſs, when they offer us the Enjoyment of a ſhort Pleaſure, upon ſo very hard and unequal a Condition as that of being Miſerable for Ever.

The eternal Rewards and Puniſhments of another Life, which are the great Sanction and Security of God's Laws, one would think ſhould be a ſufficient Weight to caſt the Scales againſt any Pleaſure, or any Pain, that this World can tempt or can threaten us withal.

And yet, after all this, will we ſtill go on to do wickedly; when *we know the terrors of the Lord*, and that we muſt one Day anſwer all our bold Violations of his Law, and Contempts of his Authority, with the loſs of our immortal Souls, and by *ſuffering the vengeance of eternal fire?*

What is it then that can give Men the *Heart* and *Courage*; but I recal that Word, becauſe it is not true *Courage*, but *fool Hardineſs*, thus to out brave the Judgment of God, and to ſet at nought the horrible and amazing Conſideration of a miſerable Eternity? How is it poſſible that Men that are awake, and in their Wits, ſhould have any Eaſe in their Minds,

FINIS